

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY KUWAIT PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY MANAMA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT PRIORITY
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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (PARA 19, LAST LINE OMITTED)
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E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: EG, IS, PINR

SUBJECT: INTSUM 495 - FEBRUARY 6, 1978

LONDON FOR KINSOLVING
PARIS FOR NICHOLAS MURPHY
OTHER ADDRESSEES FOR CHIEFS OF MISSION

SECRET/NOT RELEASABLE TO FOREIGN NATIONALS

1. EGYPT-ISRAEL. BOTH ISRAELI AND EGYPTIAN SOURCES INDICATE THAT THE RECENT ROUND OF DISCUSSION IN THE MILITARY COMMITTEE IN CAIRO WAS ESSENTIALLY A USEFUL EXERCISE IN KEEPING THE DIALOGUE GOING. MOREOVER, THE ATMOSPHERE WAS CORDIAL WITH THE EGYPTIANS EXPRESSING RESPECT AND WARMTH FOR WEIZMAN AND TAMIR. EACH SIDE APPEARS DETERMINED NOT TO ALLOW THE MILITARY COMMITTEE TO DIE. A TEN-MAN ISRAELI DELEGATION REMAINS IN EGYPT, AND THE ISRAELI CABINET VOTED YESTERDAY TO CONTINUE THE TALKS. NO DEFINITE DATE WAS DETERMINED, BUT IT WOULD BE SOME TIME AFTER SADAT RETURNED.

2. ALMOST ALL PARTICIPANTS AGREED THAT LITTLE PROGRESS WAS MADE OR COULD BE MADE ON SPECIFIC ISSUES UNTIL AFTER SADAT RETURNED FROM WASHINGTON. ACCORDING TO REPORTS

FROM EMBASSY TEL AVIV, BOTH WEIZMAN AND MILITARY INTELLIGENCE CHIEF GAZIT INDICATED THERE WAS NO SUBSTANTIVE PROGRESS WHATSOEVER.

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3. THE EGYPTIAN ATTITUDE TOWARD THE MEETING WAS GENERALLY MORE POSITIVE BUT MIXED. GAMASY AND MUBARAK, AT LEAST PUBLICLY, HAVE INDICATED THAT THEY ARE CONSIDERABLY MORE OPTIMISTIC SINCE THE MEETING. MOREOVER, THEY REPORTEDLY BELIEVE PROGRESS WAS MADE ON SOME SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES INCLUDING THE QUESTION OF AIR BASES AND DEMILITARIZATION OF PART OF THE SINAI. NEVERTHELESS, THEY ARE ALSO SAID TO BELIEVE SERIOUS PROBLEMS EXIST WHICH CAN ONLY BE SOLVED BY BEGIN AND SADAT. OTHER EGYPTIAN SOURCES, HOWEVER, WERE NOT AS OPTIMISTIC. THE DIRECTOR OF MILITARY INTELLIGENCE TOLD OUR DEFENSE ATTACHE THAT THE ISRAELIS CONTINUE TO BE DIFFICULT AND UNYIELDING.

4. PEKING HAS OFFICIALLY ENDORSED EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT SADAT'S MIDDLE EAST PEACE INITIATIVE. THE ENDORSEMENT CAME IN A STATEMENT BY PREMIER HUA KUO-FENG TRANSMITTED ON SATURDAY BY THE OFFICIAL CHINESE NEWS AGENCY.

5. HUA SAID SADAT'S CAUSE IS JUST AND "CONFORMS TO THE INTERESTS OF THE EGYPTIAN, PALESTINIAN, AND OTHER ARAB PEOPLES." THE STATEMENT WAS MADE IN CONJUNCTION WITH A MEETING BETWEEN HUA AND SPECIAL EGYPTIAN ENVOY TUHAMI, WHO DELIVERED A PERSONAL LETTER FROM SADAT. THE EGYPTIAN PRESS REPORTED LAST WEEK THAT THE LETTER WOULD SERVE TO BRING THE CHINESE UP TO DATE ON THE LATEST MIDDLE EAST DEVELOPMENTS.

6. CHINA'S WILLINGNESS TO GO ON RECORD IN SUPPORT OF SADAT REFLECTS ITS PRIVATELY EXPRESSED APPREHENSIONS THAT THE CONTINUED STALEMATE OR A BREAKDOWN IN THE EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI TALKS COULD SERIOUSLY ERODE SADAT'S SUPPORT AT HOME. TWO YEARS AGO, SIMILAR CHINESE CONCERNS OVER THE EFFECT THAT THE USSR'S HALT IN MILITARY AID TO EGYPT MIGHT HAVE HAD ON SADAT'S POSITION -- COUPLED WITH THE DESIRE TO SCORE PROPAGANDA POINTS AT SOVIET EXPENSE --
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RESULTED IN MUCH-PUBLICIZED BUT LARGELY SYMBOLIC CHINESE SHIPMENTS OF MILITARY AID TO EGYPT.

7. HUA'S ENDORSEMENT OF SADAT IS LIKELY TO BE A "ONE-SHOT; AFFAIR; PEKING HAS DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS AND POLITICAL EQUITIES TO PROTECT WITH MANY OF THE HARD-LINE ARAB GOVERNMENTS. IN QUOTING HUA AT A BANQUET FOR TUHAMI,

VICE PREMIER LI HSIEN-NIEN OMITTED HUA'S SPECIFIC STATEMENT OF SUPPORT FOR SADAT'S PEACE INITIATIVE WHILE REPEATING THE PREMIER'S URGINGS FOR ARAB UNITY. (SECRET/NOFORN).

8. REJECTIONIST SUMMIT. IN ALGIERS, THE HARDLINE "STEADFASTNESS FRONT" SUMMIT ENDED LATE SATURDAY WITHOUT ADOPTING ANY REAL MEASURES TO COUNTER SADAT'S INITIATIVE. THE MEETING'S CONCLUDING DECLAMATION IN LARGE PART FOCUSED ON CONDEMNING THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE POLICIES OF EGYPT, ISRAEL, AND THE US. THE COMMUNIQUE, AS EXPECTED, PROCLAIMED SUPPORT FOR SYRIA AND THE PLO.

9. ALGERIAN FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTEFLIKA, HOWEVER, CLAIMED THAT THE SUMMIT HAD ADOPTED SEVERAL "SECRET" RESOLUTIONS WHICH COULD NOT BE MADE PUBLIC. "WELL-INFORMED" CONFERENCE SOURCES WERE QUOTED AS SAYING THAT ONE OF THESE CONFIDENTIAL DECISIONS INVOLVED GREATER FINANCIAL BACKING FOR SYRIA. LIBYA WAS SAID TO HAVE AGREED IN PRINCIPLE TO PROVIDE SYRIA WITH FINANCING, BEYOND THAT REPORTEDLY PLEDGED IN DECEMBER, TO STRENGTHEN ITS FRONT WITH ISRAEL.

10. AS WAS THE CASE WITH THE DECEMBER TRIPOLI SUMMIT, THE ENTHUSIASM OF THE PARTICIPANTS SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN UNDER-
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MINED BY THE ABSENCE OF THE IRAQIS. THE IRAQIS MADE THEIR PRESENCE FELT, HOWEVER, BY SENDING A "DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES" TO THE SUMMIT CONFERENCE. THIS IRAQI DECLARATION -- WHICH LED THE ALGIERS MEETING TO STATE THAT IRAQ WAS WITH THEM AT LEAST IN SPIRIT -- MAY HAVE

LEFT THE DOOR OPEN TO IRAQ'S COMING ON BOARD. THE ALGIERS PARTICIPANTS AGREED TO SEND A DELEGATION TO BAGHDAD TO PURSUE THIS POSSIBILITY. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE)

11. LEBANON. SINCE SADAT'S TRIP TO JERUSALEM AND THE RESULTANT CLEAVAGES IN ARAB RANKS, THE SITUATION IN LEBANON HAS GRADUALLY WORSENER. A KEY FACTOR IN THE LEBANESE CIVIL WAR WAS THE USE OF LEBANON BY VARIOUS ARAB STATES TO FIGHT EACH OTHER BY PROXY. ONLY AFTER THE SAUDIS AND THE KUWAITIS MANAGED TO CONVINCE SADAT AND ASSAD TO PUT ASIDE THEIR DIFFERENCES OVER THE SINAI II AGREEMENT DID THE FIGHTING STOP. WITH THE RECENT EGYPTIAN-SYRIAN FALLOUT, THE SITUATION IN LEBANON MIGHT ONCE AGAIN BE UNRAVELING.

12. THE QUESTION OF THE FUTURE OF THE LEBANESE-SYRIAN RELATIONSHIP IS CLOSELY TIED TO THE INTER-ARAB CONFLICT. THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT APPEARS CONCERNED THAT INTER-ARAB RIVALRIES WILL PREVENT THE ARAB LEAGUE FROM RENEWING THIS APRIL THE MANDATE OF THE ARAB DETERRENT FORCE (ADF), THUS REMOVING THE VENEER OF LEGITIMACY OF SYRIAN OCCUPATION OF MOST OF LEBANON. BECAUSE OF THIS, SYRIA HAS INITIATED TALKS WITH A BROAD SPECTRUM OF LEBANESE LEADERS IN ORDER TO GAIN SUPPORT.

13. THE LEBANESE, HOWEVER, ARE VERY CHARY OF BEING DRAWN TOO CLOSE TO DAMASCUS. THE UNDERLYING FEAR OF DE FACTO SYRIAN ANNEXATION REMAINS STRONG. NEVERTHELESS, THE LEBANESE REALLY HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO ASK THAT THE SYRIANS REMAIN IN LEBANON. THE ADF IS NEEDED, NOT ONLY
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TO MAINTAIN SECURITY, BUT ALSO TO ALLOW THE LEBANESE ARMY TIME TO REBUILD. IF A MEETING OF THE ARAB LEAGUE CANNOT BE HELD, OR IF THE LEAGUE CANNOT AGREE ON AN EXTENSION OF THE ADF'S MANDATE, THEN LEBANON MUST SEEK ALTERNATIVE PROTECTIVE MEASURES. (EMBASSY JIDDA HAS REPORTED THAT SAUDI ARABIA WOULD BE FLEXIBLE ABOUT SUPPORTING THE EXTENSION OF THE ADF BUT THAT KUWAIT AND QATAR ARE RELUCTANT TO EXPEND ANY MORE MONEY WHEN CURRENT FINANCING EXPIRES ON APRIL 28. IF THE ADF IS EXTENDED, THE SAUDIS WOULD LIKE THE DECISION MADE BY THE ARAB LEAGUE, NOT JUST THE PARTICIPATING STATES.)

14. THE SOUTHERN LEBANON SITUATION ALSO SEEMS TO BE GETTING WORSE. WHILE FIGHTING IN THE AREA HAS NOT PICKED UP SIGNIFICANTLY, A MAJOR PALESTINIAN-LEBANESE POLITICAL-MILITARY CONFRONTATION MAY NOT BE FAR OFF. OVER THE LAST SEVERAL MONTHS, THE PALESTINIANS HAVE BEEN RECEIVING EXTENSIVE NEW SUPPLIES OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT. THE PALESTINIANS ARE APPARENTLY TRYING TO MAKE SOUTHERN LEBANON

A FORTRESS SO THAT THEY CAN RESIST LEBANESE, ISRAELI OR SYRIAN ATTEMPTS TO RESTRICT THEIR ACTIVITY. MOREOVER, THEY ARE REPORTEDLY RESETTLING PALESTINIAN CIVILIANS IN LEBANESE VILLAGES.

15. THE GROWTH OF PALESTINIAN DOMINATION IN SOUTHERN LEBANON HAS RESULTED IN MORE FREQUENT CLASHES BETWEEN THE LOCAL LEBANESE MUSLIMS AND THE PALESTINIANS. SEVERAL PROMINENT LEBANESE POLITICIANS HAVE HAD THEIR HOMES BOMBED FOR ALLEGEDLY BEING ANTI-PALESTINIAN. THE MOST SIGNIFICANT INCIDENT OCCURRED OVER LAST WEEKEND IN SIDON, LEBANON'S THIRD LARGEST CITY. FOLLOWING SHARP INTERNAL PALESTINIAN CLASHES WHICH CAUSED INNOCENT LEBANESE CASUALTIES AND

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EXTENSIVE PROPERTY DAMAGE, THE LEBANESE MUSLIM POPULATION TURNED ON THE PALESTINIANS, HURLING ROCKS AND INSULTS AT THEM. TO CALM THE SITUATION, THE PALESTINIANS HAVE AGREED TO WITHDRAW THEIR TROOPS FROM THE CITY. (WE DOUBT THAT THEY WILL ACTUALLY IMPLEMENT THE AGREEMENT.) THE INCIDENT IS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT BECAUSE THE SUNNI MUSLIMS OF SIDON HAD BEEN THE STRONGEST LEBANESE ALLIES OF THE PALESTINIANS.

16. THE LEBANESE CHRISTIANS IN NORTHERN LEBANON, MEANWHILE, APPEAR TO BE TAKING ADVANTAGE OF MUSLIM DISPLEASURE WITH THE PALESTINIANS. CHRISTIAN LEADERS HAVE STEPPED UP THEIR WARNINGS ABOUT THE PALESTINIAN PRESENCE. ONE LEADING RIGHTIST SUGGESTED THAT A PERIOD OF TIME SHOULD BE SET FOR THE PALESTINIAN WITHDRAWAL FROM LEBANON, PERHAPS TWO YEARS. OTHERS HAVE DEMANDED THAT TYRE BE CLOSED. WE EVEN HAVE HAD SOME INDICATION THAT SOME MUSLIMS ARE PREPARED TO COORDINATE ACTION WITH THE LEBANESE FRONT. WE DOUBT, HOWEVER, THAT THE MUSLIMS AND CHRISTIANS ARE YET READY TO SET ASIDE PAST DIFFERENCES AND ADDRESS THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION AS A UNITED FRONT.

17. THE CHRISTIANS IN SOUTHERN LEBANON FACE A MORE SERIOUS DIRECT THREAT FROM THE PALESTINIANS THAN DO THEIR CO-RELIGIONISTS IN THE NORTH. AS A RESULT, WE BELIEVE THEY ARE LIKELY TO INITIATE ARTILLERY EXCHANGES AND POSSIBLY MINOR CLASHES IN ORDER TO DISCOURAGE PALESTINIANS FROM SETTLING PALESTINIAN CIVILIANS CLOSE TO THE BORDER. (SECRET)

18. MOROCCO. MOROCCAN AND SOVIET OFFICIALS INITIATED AGREEMENTS IN MOSCOW LATE LAST MONTH UNDER WHICH THE USSR WILL PROVIDE DOLLARS 2 MILLION IN CREDITS TO HELP THE MOROCCANS DEVELOP THE MESKALA PHOSPHATE DEPOSITS OVER AN EIGHT-TO-10-YEAR PERIOD. THE DEAL PROVIDES FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A RAILROAD, ROAD NETWORKS, AND PORT,

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STORAGE, AND MINING FACILITIES IN MOROCCO.

19. MOSCOW WILL RECEIVE 10 MILLION TONS OF PHOSPHATE ROCK FROM MESKALA ANNUALLY FOR 30 YEARS AS REPAYMENT FOR THE CONSTRUCTION LOAN AND AS BARTER FOR SOVIET PRODUCTS. THE VALUE OF TRADE AND CREDIT TRANSACTIONS RELATED TO THE AGREEMENT EVENTUALLY COULD RISE TO AS MUCH AS DOLLARS 10 BILLION. THIS WOULD MOVE MOROCCO INTO FIRST PLACE AMONG THE USSR'S AFRICAN TRADING PARTNERS. PHOSPHATE IMPORTS WILL SUPPORT EXPANSION OF SOVIET FERTILIZER CAPACITY AND RELIEVE PRESSURE TO EXPLOIT POORER DOMESTIC DEPOSITS.

20. NEGOTIATIONS ON THE PROJECT HAD DRAGGED ON FOR FOUR YEARS. DURING THE LAST YEAR MOROCCO WAS HOLDING OUT TO GET MOSCOW TO REFRAIN FROM PUBLICLY SUPPORTING ALGERIA AGAINST MOROCCO IN THE WESTERN SAHARA DISPUTE. CONTINUING SOVIET NEUTRALITY ON THIS ISSUE PRESUMABLY IS A MOROCCAN CONDITION FOR FINALIZING THE AGREEMENT NEXT MONTH. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE) VANCE

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